The Zurich Origins of Reformed Covenant Theology. Pierrick Hildebrand. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2024. Pp. 427.

The origins and distinctiveness of Reformed covenant theology have long been debated by scholars of the Reformation and post-Reformation period. In *The Zurich Origins of Reformed Covenant Theology*, Pierrick Hildebrand offers a corrective to narratives that place too much emphasis on the influence of Philipp Melanchthon or John Calvin. Hildebrand's thesis is modest. Rather than completely dispensing with previous theories of influence, he seeks to demonstrate that Heinrich Bullinger should be counted among (not instead of) the influences on Heidelberg and later Reformed covenant theologians.

To make his point, Hildebrand's work is split into three parts. The first, "Zwingli as Initiator," highlights the role of Zwingli and the Zurich church of the 1520s. It is made up of two chapters demonstrating the seed of later Reformed covenant theology in the thought of Zwingli. Hildebrand notes the gradual change in Zwingli, arguing persuasively for a "covenantal turn" in his thought around 1525. Hildebrand argues that this turn can be dated to Zwingli's *Subsidium*. The *Subsidium* has not, hitherto, been the subject of serious scholarly attention. Given that the *Subsidium* is a polemic treatise against Roman Catholicism, rather than against Anabaptists, Hildebrand challenges the common thesis that Zwingli's covenant theology developed in his campaign against Anabaptism.

The bulk of the book is taken up in Part II, on Heinrich Bullinger. It was Bullinger who crystallized two important concepts that would be influential upon later Reformed theologians. These are (1) a prelapsarian covenant and (2) covenantal terminology that combines historical-legal and organic-mystical aspects of salvation. It is in these two areas that previous scholarship has sought to demonstrate later

Reformed deviance from Zurich. Yet, "Consideration of historical-legal and organic-mystical aspects of his covenantal thought is one way to leave false alternatives behind" (112). Hildebrand challenges the established view that Bullinger's covenantalism is first seen in *Von Dem Touff* (Nov/Dec 1525). Rather, he notes Bullinger's covenantal theology is displayed in an earlier, unpublished treatise *Vom Einigen Gott* (dated 20 October 1525). Hildebrand demonstrates that from late 1525 until the end of his career, Bullinger's theology contained a prelapsarian covenant, as well as covenant terminology which would later be appropriated by Heidelberg divines.

Part III notes the reception of Bullinger's covenant theology by John Calvin (Chapter 6), and two Heidelberg theologians, Zacharias Ursinus and Caspar Olevian (Chapter 7). It is in these chapters that Hildebrand explicitly challenges the overstated case for Melanchthon's influence on later Reformed theology. Hildebrand also demonstrates that Calvin was influenced by Bullinger, and that on numerous theological points, Bullinger and Calvin were in agreement. Thus, rather than paint a picture that neatly emphasizes one figure of influence (either Melanchthon or Calvin or Bullinger), Hildebrand offers a more nuanced picture, one in which each theologian is given his due. Given the hegemony of theses emphasizing the influence of Melanchthon and Calvin, Hildebrand's book offers a helpful corrective.

Finally, the reader is treated to a 103-page appendix of archive material. This material is made up of works by Heinrich Bullinger that are either understudied or recently discovered. While the documents contained in the appendix do not constitute a critical edition, Hildebrand has done significant work in bringing these notable texts to light. Works included among these archived materials include, but are not limited to, *Von Einigen Gott* (1525), *Von Warer Und Faslcher Leer* (1527), and *Predigtskizzen* (1536/1537). For scholars of the Swiss Reformation, the appendix alone constitutes a tremendous contribution.

Hildebrand's work offers a well-researched and persuasive thesis. Rather than imposing a new grand narrative upon the history of Reformed covenant theology, Hildebrand seeks to incorporate Bullinger into the pantheon of its influences. His work is especially helpful in noting the manner in which both Bullinger and Calvin were indebted to, yet different from, Melanchthon. This paves the way to understand how Bullinger and Calvin each exercised independent influence upon Ursinus and Olevian. Thus, overall, I find Hildebrand's argument convincing.

Three particular factors deserve note. First, Hildebrand's thesis relies on sources that have previously been either little read or unexamined. Specifically, he contends that Zwingli's "covenantal turn" can be found in the *Subsidium*, while that of Bullinger is found in *Von Einigen Gott*. The utility of these texts for this discussion will certainly be debated by scholars of the Swiss Reformation because they challenge prevailing assumptions. In particular, they place the emergence of Zurich's covenant theology at an earlier date than is typically accepted, while positing that Zwingli's covenant theology preceded that of Bullinger. The relative obscurity of the *Subsidium* and *Von Einigen Gott* invites future interpretations and contributions. Whether or not one agrees with Hildebrand's conclusions, those studying Bullinger or the history of covenant theology, will be forced to wrestle with his contentions.

Second, this book offers a substantially well-rounded picture of Bullinger's covenant theology. Old dichotomies between a "bilateral" and "unilateral" covenant are overcome by demonstrating that, to Bullinger, the covenant is instituted unilaterally by God yet is carried out by God and humanity. In numerous places, Hildebrand employs the phrase "monopleurically established, dipleurically administered" to describe Bullinger's covenantalism. Hildebrand persuasively demonstrates that this view places him in agreement with later Reformed theology.

Finally, much of Hildebrand's argument rests upon his assertion that there is a burgeoning notion of a prelapsarian covenant in the thought of Zwingli and Bullinger. In the secondary literature, such a covenant is often seen to be an imposition of Melanchthon on later Reformed thought. Hildebrand argues that many scholars have missed Zurich's unique context in understanding this question. Since so much of Zwingli and Bullinger's covenant theology was formed in the midst of polemic disputes with Roman Catholics, Lutherans, and Anabaptists, they spent little time discussing the prelapsarian state of man. Therefore, through his analysis of the sources, Hildebrand argues for an implied prelapsarian covenant in Zwingli and Bullinger.

Ultimately, while Hildebrand makes a fresh case for such a covenant in Zwingli and Bullinger, the sources force him to place numerous qualifiers on his conclusions. This tends to weaken his case. For example, in Zwingli, Hildebrand must state that a prelapsarian covenant is not explicitly stated, yet he claims that the sources "point to" such a covenant (106). Likewise, in Bullinger the prelapsarian relationship is "similar to a covenant" (179) and Bullinger "assumed" certain basic points about the prelapsarian state of man which imply a covenant (182). Finally, Hildebrand notes that Calvin had some idea of a prelapsarian covenant, but that "like Bullinger (and Zwingli) [he] seems, however, not to have been interested in, or to have seen the need for, developing the theological insights of a prelapsarian covenant" (274). Therefore, given the various qualifiers, as well as the similarity between the views of Calvin and the Zurich Reformers, one wonders if this insight serves Hildebrand's thesis as clearly as he argues. It certainly demonstrates an area of similarity between Calvin and Bullinger. Yet, one could argue that Hildebrand has not conclusively proved continuity between later Reformed divines and Zurich on the question of a prelapsarian covenant.

Overall, Pierrick Hildebrand has done the world of Reformation studies a great service with this work. His analysis of primary

source material is excellent. The exposure of little known, or hitherto unexamined, works makes a substantial contribution to Swiss Reformation scholarship. Whether or not one agrees with his analysis of these documents, future scholars will be indebted to his fresh take on the covenantal thought of Zwingli and Bullinger. Hildebrand's work engages with the latest scholarship while being well-written and easy to follow. This work is highly recommended to scholars and students interested in Reformed covenant theology.

David C. Quackenbos, *McGill University*